

7-BELL
10¢
JULY-AUGUST

GENE AUTRY COMICS



A DELL
10¢
MAGAZINE JULY-AUGUST

Gene Autry COMICS

11N 25 A.M.



GENE AUTRY

and *The HAUNTED RANCH*

MAYBE THIS HOMBRE COMIN' IN THE BUCKBOARD CAN TELL US WHERE TO FIND THE TUMBLIN'-K SPREAD, CHAMP!



HEY, MISTER! WHICH WAY IS THE TRAIL TO JIM KERR'S RANCH THE TUMBLIN'-K?



IT'S RIGHT DOWN THAT WAY! BUT IF YOU'RE SMART YOU'LL STEER CLEAR O THAT OUTFIT!

WHY? WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE TUMBLIN'-K?



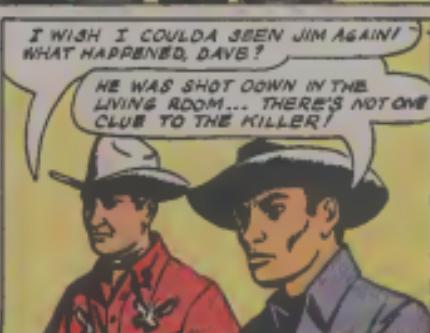
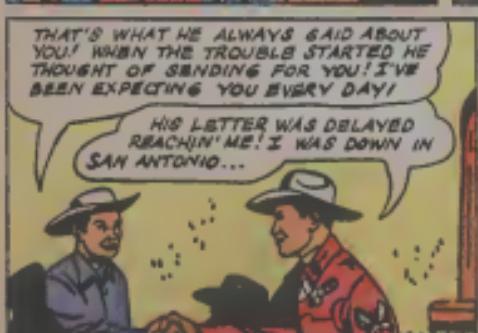
PLENTY! EVIL'S BEEN BREWIN' THERE FOR WEEKS! AN' IT'S PLUMB BILED OVER SINCE JIM GOT MURDERED!

JIM KERR KILLED! WHEN? HOW? WHO DID IT?



WELL, THE SHERIFF FIGGERS IT WAS A ROBBER! BUT EVERYBODY ELSE THINKS IT WARNT NO HUMAN BEIN PULLED THAT TRIGGER!





I HEARD SOME TALK ABOUT A GHOST... EL VIENTO...

THAT CRAZY GOSSIP'S COSTIN' ME PLENTY O' TROUBLE! MY COWHANDS ARE THREATENNIN' TO QUIT!



SPOSE YOU BEGIN AT THE BEGINNIN', DAVE!

EL VIENTO WAS A BANDIT IN THE OLD SPANISH DAYS! HE BUILT THIS HOUSE! THERE'S A LEGEND THAT, EVERY TWENTY-FIVE YEARS, HE COMES BACK TO HAUNT IT AND MURDER THE TENANTS!

A WEEK BEFORE UNCLE JIM WAS SHOT, STRANGE THINGS BEGAN TO HAPPEN... FLICKERIN' LIGHTS AT NIGHT, WEIRD WHISTLING, WARNING NOTES...



WHEN UNCLE JIM GOT A DEATH THREAT, HE LAUGHED AT IT! THAT NIGHT A SHOT AWOKE ME! I RAN DOWNSTAIRS AND FOUND HIM... DYING...

HE JUST HAD STRENGTH ENOUGH TO WHISPER ONE SENTENCE... "TELL GENE... CHIEF YELLOW HAIR..."



"CHIEF YELLOW HAIR?" THAT'S ONE INDIAN I NEVER HEARD OF!

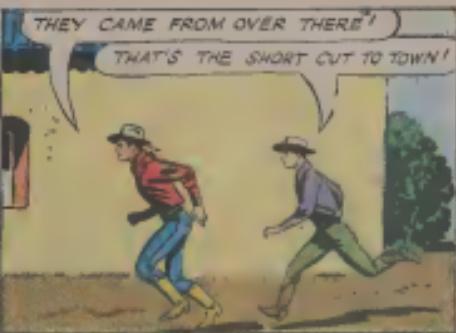
IT'S THE RIGHT NAME, I'M SURE! THEN UNCLE JIM DIED WITHOUT ANOTHER WORD!

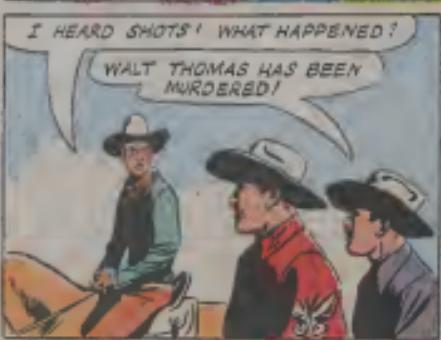


A GHOST BANDIT... AND AN INDIAN CHIEF! IT SOUNDS LOCO, DAVE! DOES ANYONE ELSE KNOW ABOUT JIM'S MESSAGE TO ME?

NO! I FIGGERED IT WAS NOBODY'S BUSINESS BUT YOURS!







IF THEY QUIT, I'M SUNK! A TENDERFOOT
LIKE ME NEEDS PLENTY OF HELP TO RUN
THIS BIG RANCH!

DON'T WORRY, DAVE! I'LL SEE
YOU THROUGH! NOW LET'S GET
GOIN'!

A LITTLE WHILE BEFORE YOU RODE IN,
WALT SAID HE WAS GOING TO TOWN TO
TELL THE SHERIFF SOMETHING ABOUT
THE GHOST!

DID ANYBODY ELSE HEAR HIM SAY THAT?

YES! THREE OR FOUR OF THE
BOYS WERE THERE!

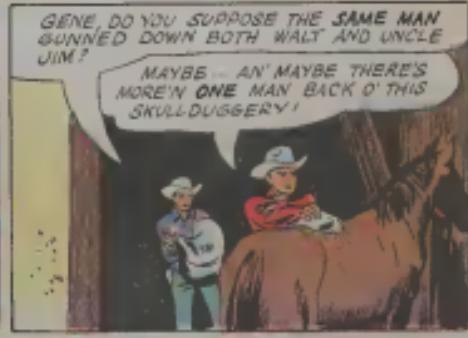
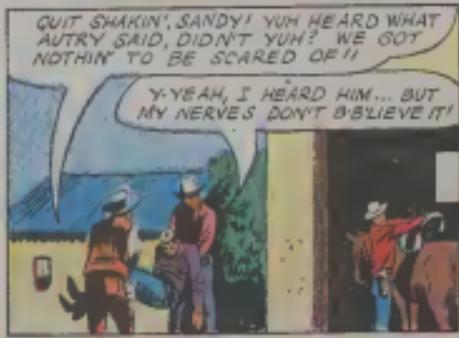
THEN WOULDN'T HE HIT LEATHER
FAST TO AMBUSH WALT ON THE
WAY TO TOWN BEFORE HE COULD
SPILL WHAT HE KNEW TO THE
SHERIFF?

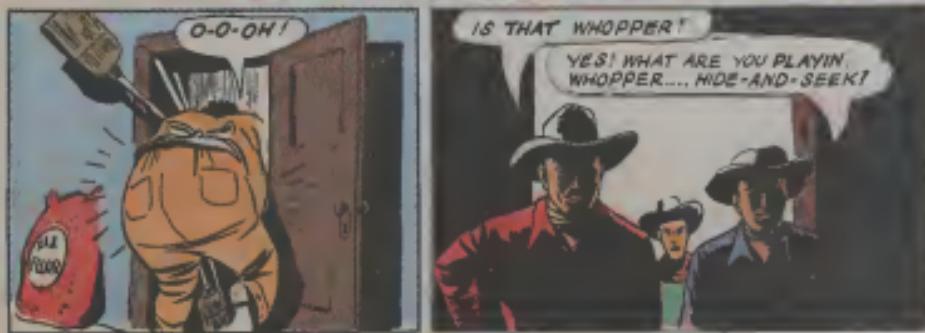
IF THAT'S TRUE, GENE, IT MEANS THE
MURDERER MUST BE RIGHT HERE ON
THE TUMBLIN'-K!

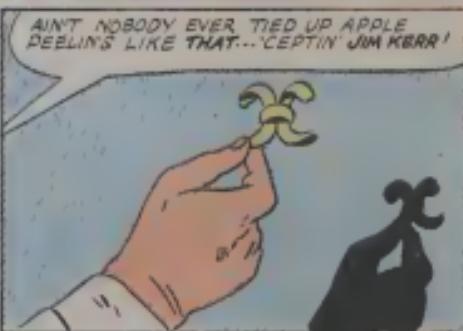
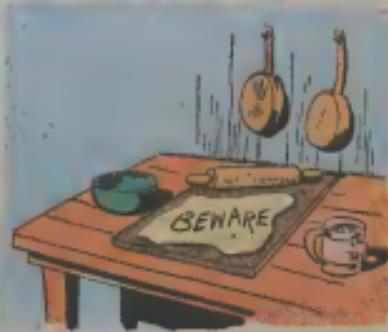
EITHER THAT, OR HE'S GOT A PAL
HERE!

...A FEW MINUTES LATER...

...AN' THAT'S HOW IT HAPPENED, BOYS! WALT
WAS PROB'LY SHOT TO KEEP HIM FROM
TALKIN' TO THE SHERIFF! SO IF YOU COME
ACROSS ANYTHING SUSPICIOUS, DON'T TALK
ABOUT IT... EXCEPT TO ME!







DID YOU SEE THE GHOST DOIN' THESE THINGS, WHOPPER?

NODE! I WUZ IN TH' FRONT PARLOR, TRYIN' TO FIND OUT WHO WUZ PLAYIN' JIMS GHOSTAR!

UNCLE JIM'S GUITAR HASN'T BEEN OUT OF THE CASE SINCE HE DIED!



I'LL SHOW YUH! I WUZ SO SKEERED, I LEFT EVERYTHING JEST LIKE IT WUZ!

IT'S WORKIN' SWELL, HANK, BUT LET'S GET RID O' THAT AUTRY BIRD, FAST! HE'S TOO NOSY!

DON'T WORRY, ARTIE! WELL FIX HIM!



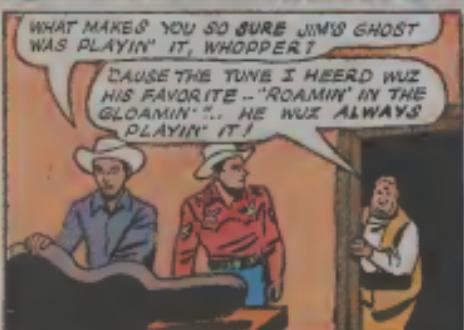
THAR IT IS! ON THE CHAIR! RIGHT WHERE JIMS G-HOST LEFT IT!

THAT'S UNCLE'S GUITAR, SURE ENOUGH!



WHAT MAKES YOU SO SURE JIMS GHOST WAS PLAYIN' IT, WHOPPERT?

CAUSE THE TUNE I HEARD WUZ HIS FAVORITE - "ROAMIN' IN THE GLOAMIN'". HE WUZ ALWAYS PLAYIN' IT!



THE WINDOWS'RE ALL LOCKED, AUTRY, AND TH' FRONT DOOR! NOBODY BUT A G-HOST COULD'A GOT IN HERE WITHOUT ME SEEIN' HIM!



BUT SOMEBODY DID GET IN - AN' IT WASN'T A GHOST! WHEN YOU WENT TO THE PARLOR, WHOPPER, THAT PERSON SLIPPED OUT TO THE KITCHEN AN'...

WHOEVER'S DOIN' ALL THIS KNEW YOUR UNCLE MIGHTY WELL, DAVE - HIS FAVORITE TUNE AN' HOW HE PEELED AN' APPLE ...

BUT THAT AIN'T POSSIBLE ...



THAT'S NOT MUCH HELP, GENE! EVERYBODY HERE HAS BEEN ON THE PLACE AT LEAST A YEAR! THEY ALL KNEW UNCLE JIM WELL!



BE SURE TO BLOCK THE DOOR SO'S I CAN GET AWAY, ARTIE!

OKAY, BOSS!



GET GOIN', ARTIE! AUTRY'S COMIN' INTO RANGE!





I DON'T KNOW NOTHIN' ABOUT NO
KNIFE-THROWIN', MISTER! I COME
FOR MY MONEY! I'M QUITTIN'!



BE SENSIBLE, ARTIE! THERE'S NO SUCH THINGS
AS GHOSTS!

QUIT GABBIN' AN PAY ME OFF!



EVER SEE THIS KNIFE BEFORE, WHOPPER?



Y-YEAH ... IT'S M-MY B-BREAD KNIFE!
B-BUT, I DIDN'T ...



I'M SURE YOU DIDN'T THROW IT, WHOPPER!
AN I'M GETTIN' AN IDEA WHO DID!



MORE GHOST TROUBLE, AUTRY!

YES! ARTIE'S QUITTIN'...



PRETTY SOON THERE WON'T BE A
COWHAND LEFT ON THE PLACE! DAVE
OUGHTA SELL OUT LIKE JIM WANTED HIM
TO - AN' GO TO COLLEGE!

IF NOBODY'LL WORK ON A HAUNTED
RANCH, WHO'D BUY ONE?



I MIGHT BUY IT! I AINT SCARED O'
GHOSTS!

THAT'S RIGHT INTERESTIN'
KINDA PUTS YOU IN A CLASS
BY YOURSELF, DOESN'T IT?



WHAT DID YOU MEAN BY THAT CRACK, AUTRY?

NO HARM! I MIGHT EVEN TALK DAVE INTO ACCEPTIN' AN OFFER... IF IT WAS A GOOD ONE!

YOU'RE ACTIN' LIKE A FOOL, ARTIE!

THAT GOES FOR YOU, TOO, DAVE... STAYIN' ON HERE...

IF YOU PAID MORE'N TWENTY BUCKS FOR THIS SADDLE, YOU GOT GYPPED!

KEEP YORE NOSE OUTA MY BUSINESS, AUTRY, IF YUH WANNA STAY HEALTHY!

BETTER KEEP TABS ON ARTIE, TILL HE LEAVES, HANK! HE MIGHT SET THE BUNKHOUSE ON FIRE -- THE WAY HE'S FEELIN'!

OKAY!

DO YOU KEEP MUCH CASH IN THERE, DAVE?

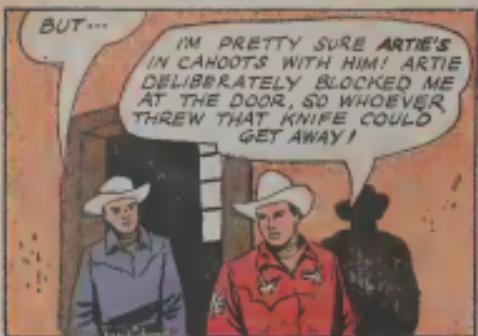
THERE ISN'T MUCH TO KEEP!

BUT I THOUGHT JIM HAD PLENTY O' MONEY! THIS RANCH...

HE LEFT A LOT O' CASH, BUT HE DIED WITHOUT TELLIN' WHERE IT IS!

UNCLE JIM DIDN'T BELIEVE IN BANKS! SO I KNOW HIS MONEY'S HERE ON THE RANCH...

THEN THAT'S WHY JIM WAS SHOT! AN' WHY SOMEBODY'S TRYIN' TO SCARE OFF ALL YOUR COWHANDS - AN' FORCE YOU TO QUIT OR SELL OUT... THE KILLER WANTS A FREE HAND TO LOOK FOR THE CASH!



NOT SO FAST, HANK! LISTEN, BOYS! IF I PROMISE TO CLEAR UP THIS MYSTERY IN THE NEXT TWENTY-FOUR HOURS, WILL YOU STICK IT OUT TILL THEN?

I'M WILLIN'-- I GUESS--WHAT SAY, SANDY?

A-ALL RIGHT, B-BUT IF I DON'T WAKE UP DEAD TOMORROW M-MORNIN', I'LL BE S-SURPRISED!



I HOPE SHERIFF MARKS REMEMBERS ME, CHAMP,
SO'S HE WONT MIND ANSWERIN' A COUPLE O' QUESTIONS!

LATER

SHERIFF
FRED MARKS

LODGE
CITY
CAFE



I'M SURE GLAD YOU'RE TAKIN' ON THIS
CASE, AUTRY! I'VE GOT MY HANDS FULL...

I'M GLAD TO DO WHAT I CAN, SHERIFF,
BUT I MAY NEED YOUR HELP AT THE
SHOWDOWN!

I'D LIKE TO KNOW TWO THINGS-- FIRST,
ARE THERE ANY SECRET
PASSAGES IN THAT HOUSE OF
JIM KERRIST?

EVERYBODY SAYS
SO! NEVER HEARD O'
ANYBODY FINDIN' EM,
THOUGH! THE STORY IS
THAT EL VIENTO BUILT 'EM
SO HE COULD HIDE FROM
THE SOLDIERS!



THE SECOND THING IS-- HAVE YOU
HEARD OF AN INDIAN IN THESE PARTS
CALLED "CHIEF YELLOW HAIR"?

NOPE! THERE AINT BEEN
ANY INJUNS IN THIS COUNTY
FOR THIRTY YEARS!

SEND WORD IF YOU NEED ME, GENE!
I'LL COME PRONTO! SORRY I WASN'T
MUCH HELP...

YOU'VE HELPED A LOT,
SHERIFF!



A FEW
MINUTES
LATER...

YOU SAY YOU SOLD A CHEAP
MEXICAN SADDLE TO ARTIE
BATES LAST WEEK?

YEP! FIGGERED IT WAS KINDA
QUEER HIM BUYIN' IT, WHEN HE'S
GOT A GOOD ONE!

HORTON
SADDLERY
MAKER
FINE SADDLES

THANKS! THAT'S ALL I WANTED TO
KNOW!



THINGS'RE BEGINNIN' TO ADD UP, CHAMP!
ARTIE BOUGHT THAT SADDLE TO USE
FOR A "BLIND"--- I'LL BET HE'S STILL
HANSIN' AROUND THE TUMBLIN'-K!



EVERYTHING OKAY, DAVE?

YES--- RECKON OUR GHOSTS
HAVE BEEN TAKIN' NAPS!



DID YOU HAVE ANY LUCK, GENE?

YES! THE END OF THE TRAIL'S
GETTIN' CLOSE! TOMORROW
OUGHTA BURY BOTH YOUR GHOSTS!



I'M BETTIN' IT'LL BURY AUTRY, TOO...
SIX FEET UNDER!



THAT NIGHT... IN WHOOPER'S BEDROOM...





THERE'S NOBODY OUT THERE!

AN IT'S A SHEER DROP TO THE GROUND!



THERE AREN'T ANY LADDER MARKS ON THE SILL!



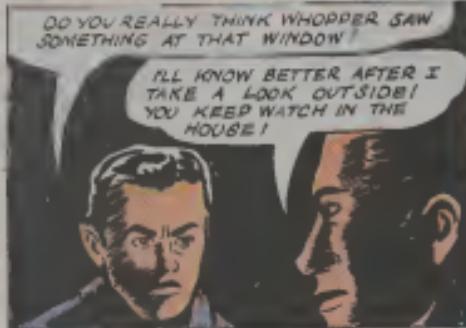
C'MON, DAVE! LET'S SCOUT AROUND FOR WHOPPER'S GHOST!

GHOST! IT WAS THAT WATER-MELON AND CAKE AND PICKLES HE ATE FOR SUPPER!



DO YOU REALLY THINK WHOPPER SAW SOMETHING AT THAT WINDOW?

I'LL KNOW BETTER AFTER I TAKE A LOOK OUTSIDE! YOU KEEP WATCH IN THE HOUSE!



NOW WHAT DO YOU S'POSE MADE THOSE MARKS?



THEY LOOK LIKE HOLES A LADDER WOULD MAKE, BUT...



HERE'S THE THIRD SET OF 'EM! THEY'RE ABOUT AS FAR APART AS THE LENGTH OF A MAN'S STRIDE!



GUESS I'D BETTER NOT TAKE CHANCES
ON BEIN' SEEN BY THE HOMBRE
THAT MADE THOSE MARKS!

IF I WAS GOIN' TO HIDE SOMETHIN'
QUICK, I'D PICK THE BARN! MAYBE HE
DID, TOO!



THERE'S NOTHIN' THAT COULD'A MADE
THOSE MARKS DOWN HERE! SO MAYBE
IT'S UP IN THE HAYLOFT!

I'VE HIT SOMETHIN'!



STILTS! SO THEY'RE WHAT MADE THOSE MARKS
AN' RAISED HIM UP TO WHOPPER'S WINDOW! THAT
HOMBRE'S A SMART ONE!



PHOSPHORESCENT PAINT! THAT
EXPLAINS WHOPPER'S GHOST WITH A
SHINY FACE

NO USE TIPPIN' HIM OFF I'M WISE TO
HIS LITTLE GAME, TILL I'M READY TO
START DEALIN' THE LAST HAND!



NEXT MORNING...
IN THE
BUNKHOUSE...

LOOK AT MY PANTS! HOW
AM I EVER GOIN' TO
SIT INTO 'EM?

THAT'S NOTHIN'! MY BOOTS ARE
FULL O' KEROSENE!



W-WHAT'S TH-THIS?



HEY, FELLOWS! WE'RE ALL GOIN' TO DIE!

EVERYONE ON THIS
RANCH AT
SUNDOWN
IS MARKED
FOR
DEATH
EL VIENTO



SO YOU'RE BACKIN' DOWN ON YOUR
WORD TO STAY HERE TWENTY-FOUR
HOUR'S! I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE
A COWARD!

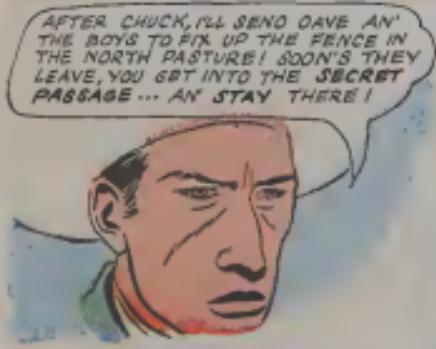
THAT'S ENOUGH, AUTRY!
I'LL STICK IT OUT TILL
SUNDOWN, AN' NOT A
MINUTE MORE!



I DON'T THINK
IT'LL TAKE ME THAT
LONG, HANK!

I'VE GOT TO GET ARTIE OUT, PRONTO!





IF AUTRY FELL FOR THAT TALK O'MINE ABOUT THE SECRET PASSAGE, HE'LL BE RIGHT IN LINE WITH THIS WINDOW!



YEAH! THERE HE IS. . .THE DOPE!



HERE'S WHERE THE TUMBLIN' K GETS A THIRD GHOST!



IF I'VE GUESSED RIGHT, HANK OUGHTA BE ALONE ANY MINUTE NOW!



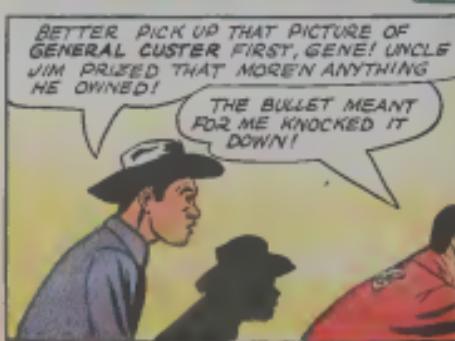
MIRRORS SURE ARE HANDY GADGETS!



OWWW!







CHIEF YELLOW HAIR!!! THIS IS
GENERAL CUSTER!!

I REMEMBER NOW! THE INDIANS
CALLED GENERAL CUSTER, "CHIEF
YELLOW HAIR"!

HERE, WHOPPER! HANG ONTO THIS TILL WE
GET A COUPLE OF OTHER THINGS
CLEARED UP!

G-GOSH! JIM NEVER EVEN LET
ME DUST THIS PICTURE!!

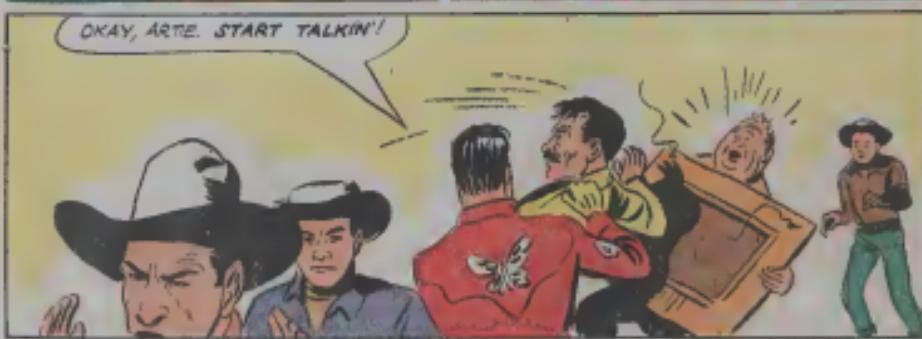
HERE'S YOUR GHOST, BOYS!... ARTIE BATES!
ONLY I'M AFRAID HE WON'T LIVE LONG ENOUGH
TO HANG!

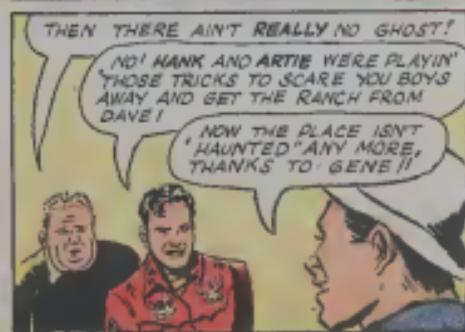
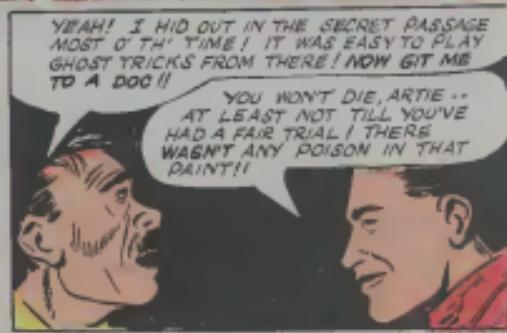
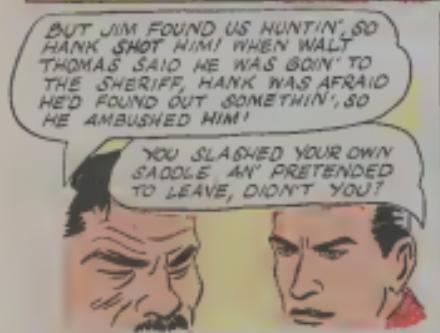
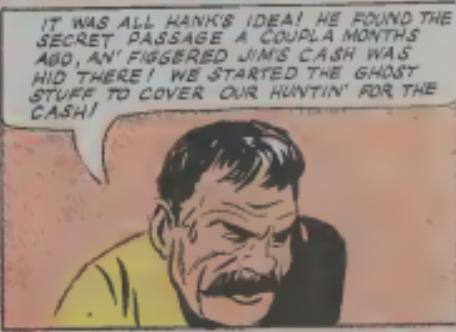
HUH? WHADDAYA MEAN?

I'M PRETTY SURE THAT PAINT YOU USED
WHEN YOU SCARED WHOPPER WITH THE
GHOST FACE WAS POISONED! IT---

I GUESS HANK FIGURED IF HE
GOT RID OF YOU, TOO, HE'D
HAVE ALL THE CASH FOR
HIMSELF!

POISONED???







"Do-a-vey! Davey Adams!"

When Mom used that tone Davey knew he must answer a-running or she'd coop him up in the house all day and tell Dad on him that night. Dad was Sheriff Fred Adams and his blue eyes could turn to glinting ice when he was angry. So Davey propped the old wagon wheel, with which he had been playing, against the side of the stable and raced across the ranch yard toward the house.

Molly Adams was standing in the kitchen doorway, arms akimbo above her starched checked apron. "Look at that woodpile!" She pointed an accusing finger at a dozen sticks of wood scattered near the rain barrel. "Didn't Dad tell you to keep that wood piled neatly?"

"Yes'm." Davey rubbed his bare toes in the dust. "But, Mom, the wheel got away from me on' smacked into it."

"That awful wheel!" Molly interrupted. "It's always getting away from you! You broke a whole row of tomato plants with it, knocked over a pailful of milk, broke the hen yard fence . . ." She paused, her eyes thoughtful. "I've got a good mind to make you chop it up for kindling."

"Oh, no, Mom," Davey wailed. "Please don't! I won't play with it in the yard again. I'll roll it up in the canyon. Please, Mom! I'm gettin' so good at rollin' it! Why, it goes just where I aim it, almost as if it was alive!"

Molly looked down into her son's eager, pleading face. She remembered the scarcity of toys for ten-year-olds in the raw, new West. "All right, Davey,"

she said at last, "but, if you ever roll it near this house again, it goes up in smoke."

"And you won't tell Dad I . . . er . . . kinda forgot the chores this mornin'?"

Molly smiled. "Not if you hurry and do them while I mix up a batch of doughnuts. Doughnuts might make Dad forget to ask what time you got through."

"Maybe they'll make him forget Block Mike, too," chirped Davey, racing away toward the scattered wood.

Those words rang in Molly's ears all day. If Fred only could forget Block Mike! For two months, ever since Fred had shot it out with three of Block Mike's gang, the shadow of the notorious outlaw had hung over them. Molly could remember every word of the bandit leader's threatening note: "Think yer smart, don't you, Sheriff? I'm comin' back to these parts and when I do I'm comin' to get you!"

Block Mike had never been known to back down on a threat. Several graves in the Southwest bore mute testimony to that. So his shadow hovered blackly above the Adams home and Molly often saw worry in her husband's eyes. Fred Adams wasn't worried because he lacked courage but because he feared he would not beat Block Mike to the draw. Then the desperado's reign of terror would continue unchecked.

As soon as Davey saw Dad that night, he knew something was wrong because the little muscles were buncheted along Dad's jaw. And there was no warmth in Dad's blue eyes. They were frosty, like icicle tips.

Molly took one look at her tall, bronzed husband in the brightness of the kitchen and the question leaped from her lips, "He's back, isn't he, Fred?"

Fred nodded and tossed his big Stetson on the hook by the door. Cold chills ran up and down Davey's spine. Dad had not taken off his gun belt to hang it under the hat, as he usually did.

"Sheriff Bagby, over in Canon City, sent me word this noon that Black Mike's headed this way, robbin' an' shootin' as he comes. It won't be long now." Dad's voice was as frozen as his eyes.

Davey was a true child of the West, so he knew what Dad meant. He had seen guns spit death before. Silently he resolved that Black Mike's gun would not spit death at his beloved Dad. Not if HE could help it!

The Adams home was carefully barred and locked that night. Several times, as the hours dragged toward dawn, Molly slipped from window to window, checking the shadows, watching for moving ones. She knew that Black Mike would head for Fred first, to make good the threat he had made.

The sun was flooding the rangeland next morning when Fred came into the kitchen to find Molly cooking flapjacks. He was wearing his gun and there were lines of strain around his mouth, but he grinned as he said:

"Where's Davey? Still sleepin'?"

Molly shook off her icy dread to smile back. "Mercy, no! He's out doing his chores. He says if Black Mike comes around, he wants the work caught up."

Fred chuckled. "He's a funny kid." He sniffed hungrily. "Gosh, those smell good. I'll have a couple dozen."

Molly turned a flushed face from the stove. "Worrying hasn't taken your appetite then?"

Fred started for the table. "Nope, I can always eat . . . Black Mike or no Black Mike."

"Maybe I got somethin' to say about that!" The snarling voice came from the back door. "Up with 'em, Sheriff!"

Slowly Fred's hands rose into the air. Molly fought off faintness as she stared at the black-bearded giant in the open doorway.

"You might give him a chance to draw against you!" she blurted.

Black Mike leered at her. "Spunky, ain't ya? Well, I'm settlin' my score . . . here an' now!" The ugly muzzle of his gun pointed straight at Fred's broad chest.

Crash! Something hit Mike's legs, spilling him like a sack of meal. Crash! The same something landed against the breakfast table, smashing it to the floor. Instantly Fred was on top of the outlaw, grabbing his gun and saying, "Reckon you talked too soon, Mike."

Molly was staring at the dust-smeared spokes in the wreckage of the table. "The wheel!" she gasped. "Davey's wagon wheel!"

Davey squeezed past Dad and his prisoner, his words tumbling out in an excited stream. "I didn't have a gun, Mom, so I got the wheel an' hid in the barn. I saw Black Mike sneakin' down from the canyon . . . all alone. Then I—" He stopped to eye the wreckage. "Gee! I sure messed things up, didn't I? Are you mad, Mom? Are you gonna burn the wheel?"

Molly gathered him into her arms, speaking through her tears. "Of course, not! You can keep the wheel always. I'll never say a word. Oh, Davey—my baby!"

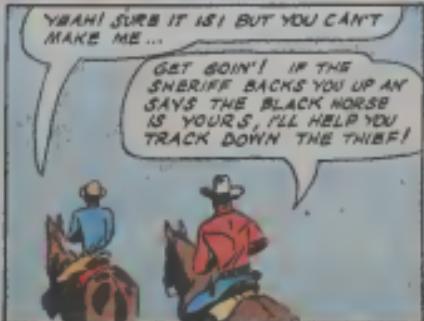
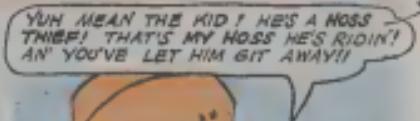
"Baby, nothin'!" Fred said proudly. "Beginnin' tomorrow, he's goin' to learn how to use a gun . . . just in case he hasn't got a wagon wheel handy the next time he meets up with an outlaw!"



GENE AUTRY

and the Black IMP





THE ORNERY COYOTES!! THAT HOMBRE ON THE CHESTNUT
MUSTA BEEN HIDIN' SOMEWHERE ... WAITIN'...



GUESS THEY QUIT CHASIN' US, IND,
'CAUSE THEY FINALLY FIGGERED THEY'D
NEVER CATCH YOU!



THAT'S STONE RIDGE YONDER, ISN'T IT?

YEAH! BUT I STILL SAY IT'S
NO USE SEEIN' THE SHERIFF!
THAT HOSS THIEF'S PROBABLY
HALFWAY TO THE BORDER BY
NOW!



WOULDN'T SURPRISE ME NONE IF YOU WUZ IN
CAHOOTS WITH THAT HOSS THIEF!



IF YOU'RE ON THE LEVEL, YOU
OUGHTA WANT TO TALK TO THE
SHERIFF!



AN IF YOU'RE NOT, I FIGURE THE
LAW'LL WANT TO TALK TO YOU!



SLASH COBB!!! WHAT THE--

COVER THIS HOMBRE, SHERIFF!
HE'S PLUMB LOCO! THINKS I'M
AN OUTLAW OR SOMETHIN'!



I WUZ RIDIN' ALONG, MINDIN' MY OWN
BIZNESS, WHEN HE JUMPED ME ...

...HE FIRED A SHOT AT ME, AN' ...

THAT'S A LIE, SHERIFF! HE WAS
CHASIN' A KID, TRYIN' TO GUN
HIM DOWN!

HOLD ON! PUT YORE GUN UP, MISTER,
AN' THEN TELL ME ...

YUH GOTTA LISTEN TO ME
FIRST, SHERIFF! THIS
CRAZY HOMBRE ...

KEEP QUIET, SLASH, AN' SIT DOWN...BOTH
O' YOU! NOW, STRANGER, START TALKIN'!

QUICKLY, GENE TELLS HIS STORY...

NOW, SLASH, WHATVE YOU
GOT TO SAY?

THERE AINT A WORD O' TRUTH IN
THAT YARN, SHERIFF! I NEVER
EVEN SEEN A KID!

I'M TELLIN' YUH, SHERIFF, THIS HOMBRE'S
CRAZY! YOU GOTTA LOCK HIM UP!

NOT ON JEST YORE SAY-SO,
SLASH! THE LAW SAYS THERE'S
GOT TO BE A CHARGE ...

ALL RIGHT! I'M CHARGIN' HIM
WITH ASSAULT AN' ATTEMPTED
MURDER!



ALL RIGHT, AUTRY! EVERYBODY IN THESE DARTS KNOWS ABOUT YOU! I'LL TELL YOU ANYTHING I KNOW, AN' GLAD TO!

I DON'T SAVVY WHY SLASH LIED ABOUT THE KID - AN' WHY HE WAS CHASIN' HIM WITH A GUN!

REV
DANIELSON

SAY, AUTRY, WHAT DID THIS KID LOOK LIKE?

ABOUT FIFTEEN... SANDY HAIR... FRECKLED FACE - RIDIN' A BIG BLACK HORSE WITH A WHITE STAR ON ITS FOREHEAD!

THAT DESCRIPTION COULDN'T FIT ANYBODY BUT BOBBY RILEY AN' HIS HORSE, IMP!

DO YOU KNOW WHY SLASH SHOULD BE AFTER HIM?

I GOT A PRETTY GOOD IDEA! SLASH WORKS FOR DEKE MAXON! DEKE USED TO OWN IMP! HE WANTS HIM BACK BAD!

IF IMP USED TO BE DEKE'S HORSE, HOW COME BOBBY RILEY'S GOT HIM NOW?

BOBBY AN' HIS SISTER, NAN, OWN IMP LEGAL! DEKE OWNS IMP'S FATHER, SATAN!

DEKE TRIED TO TRAIN THE COLT, IMP, FOR RACIN'! BUT HE DIDN'T HAVE ANY LUCK, SO HE SOLD HIM CHEAP TO BOBBY'S PA, GEORGE RILEY!

BOBBY AN' NAN WORKED MIRACLES WITH THAT COLT! IMP'S THE BEST RACEHORSE IN THE COUNTY TODAY!



WHEN DEKE FOUND THIS OUT, HE TRIED TO BUY
IMP BACK! RILEY WOULDN'T SELL! TWO MONTHS
AGO RILEY WAS DRY-GULCHED--SHOT IN THE
BACK!



I'M POSITIVE DEKE WAS BACK O' THE KILLIN', BUT I CAN'T PROVE IT! HE'S BEEN TRYIN' TO FORCE THE KIDS TO SELL THE IMP!



BUT THEY TURNED HIM DOWN FLAT!
THEY'VE GOT THEIR HEARTS SET ON
PAYIN' OFF THE MORTGAGE BY WINNIN'
THE BIG RACE AT THE RODEO!



DEKE'S GOT A HORSE IN THE RACE, TOO! SATAN
THE SECOND, HALF BROTHER TO IMP! HE'S A
SURE WINNER--IF IMP DOESN'T RUN!



WHEN I STOPPED HIM FROM GOIN' AFTER
BOBBY, HE TRIED TO GET ME OUTA
THE WAY AN' THREW THE LAW OFF
THE TRACK!



THAT MAKES SENSE, AUTRY! DEKE CAN'T RACE IMP
THE HORSE WON'T LET ANYBODY RIDE HIM BUT BOBBY!



HERE COMES DEKE MAXON AN' ONE O' HIS COMMANDS!
TWO TO ONE HE'S HEADIN' FOR THE CIRCLE-R, THE RILEY RANCH!



THOSE POOR KIDS! THEY'RE NO MATCH FOR THAT HOMBRE! GUESS I BETTER GO OUT AN' STAY THERE TILL AFTER THE RACE!



WHAT DO YOU THINK O' ME DRIFTIN' OUT AN' OFFERIN' MY SERVICES?

FINE! THE KIDS AN' I'LL BE MIGHTY GRATEFUL -- IF YOU'VE GOT THE TIME!



I'VE GOT THE TIME... AN' I'D LIKE TO SEE THOSE KIDS GET A FAIR DEAL!

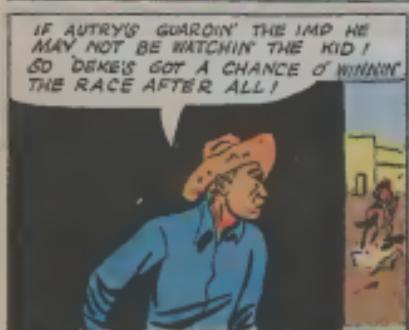
THE CIRCLE-R'S STRAIGHT OUT THIS ROAD -- WATCH YOUR STEP, AUTRY!



I WILL! AN' I'LL WATCH THAT RACE-HORSE, TOO!



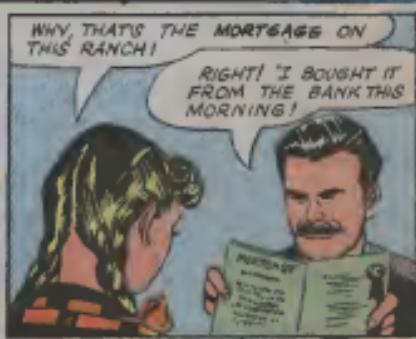
IF AUTRY'S GUARDIN' THE IMP HE MAY NOT BE WATCHIN' THE KID! SO DEKE'S GOT A CHANCE O' WINNIN' THE RACE AFTER ALL!



A LITTLE LATER...

THE SHERIFF WAS RIGHT! DEKE WAS HEADIN' FOR THE RILEY RANCH! THAT GIRL MUST BE NAN, BOBBY'S SISTER!

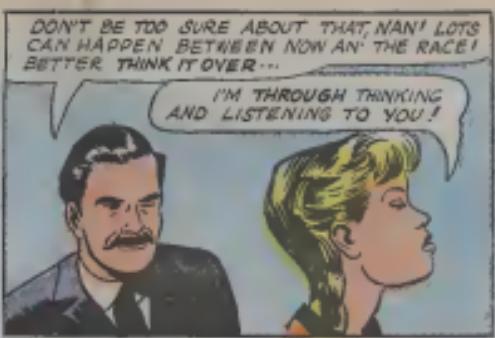




THAT'S THE DAY IMP IS GOING TO WIN THE BIG RACE AND FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS...MORE THAN ENOUGH TO PAY THE MORTGAGE!

DON'T BE TOO SURE ABOUT THAT, NAN! LOTS CAN HAPPEN BETWEEN NOW AN' THE RACE! BETTER THINK IT OVER...

I'M THROUGH THINKING AND LISTENING TO YOU!



NOT SO FAST, SISTER!

LET GO OF ME!



I'M SICK O' YOUR STALLIN'! YOU SIGN IMP OVER TO ME OR ILL...

YOU'LL WHAT?



WHO IN BLAZES-----?

GET THEIR GUNS, MISS NAN!



GET THEIR GUNS, MISS NAN!



BUT WHO-- HOW--??

MY NAMES GENE AUTRY,
MISS NAN! I HEARD WHAT
THIS HOMBRE SAID TO YOU!



YOU TWO GET MOVIN' FAST! AN'
DON'T COME BACK HERE AGAIN!
NEXT TIME I'LL SHOOT FIRST AN'
TALK LATER!



I DON'T KNOW HOW TO THANK YOU MISTER AUTRY! BUT HOW DID YOU HAPPEN TO COME OUT HERE?

SHERIFF WEST TOLD ME THE WHOLE STORY! I FOLLOWED MAXON OUT HERE!



GOSH! THAT LOOKS LIKE THE CHESTNUT SLASH'S PAL WAS RIDIN'!



I FIGURED YOU AN' BOBBY COULD USE SOME EXTRA HELP IN GUARDIN' YOUR HORSE!

WE CERTAINLY CAN!



SO THAT'S HIS GAME! HE'S GOIN' TO PRETEND TO HELP US!



I'LL PUT A STOP TO HIS TRICKS RIGHT NOW!



STICK 'EM UP!

WHAT--?

BOBBY!



PUT DOWN THOSE GUNS, BOBBY! THIS IS...

I KNOW WHO HE IS! ONE O' DEKE'S GANG! TRYIN' TO TRICK US...

HE'S A FRIEND OF SHERIFF WEST! HE'S COME OUT TO HELP US GUARD IMP...

THAT'S HIS TRICK! HE'S PLANNIN' TO STEAL IMP--FOR DEKE!



HE AN' SLASH COULD WAYLAID ME THIS MORNING! I'M SONNA TEACH HIM HE CAN'T...



YOU'RE ALL WRONG, BOBBY! GIVE ME THOSE GUNS! THIS MAN IS GENE AUTRY!

G-GENE AUTRY! THE OUTLAW HUNTER! ARE YOU SURE?



SEE! I DIDN'T KNOW...

MISTER AUTRY JUST MADE DEKE MAXON GO AWAY FROM HERE!



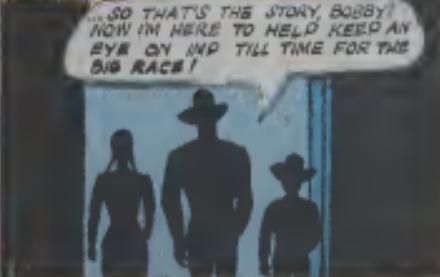
I'M AWFUL SORRY, MISTER AUTRY! I'M GORTA MIXED UP!

I'M HERE TO HELP YOU, BOBBY! I'LL TELL YOU WHAT HAPPENED THIS MORNING WHEN I FIRST SAW YOU AN' SLASH...



A FEW MINUTES LATER...

...SO THAT'S THE STORY, BOBBY! NOW I'M HERE TO HELP KEEP AN EYE ON IMP TILL TIME FOR THE BIG RACE!







GENE! THANK GOODNESS, YOU'RE ALIVE!

HE'S A POOR SHOT, NAN-- ONLY SCRATCHED ME! I'LL BE ALL RIGHT!



A LITTLE LATER...

DEKE SURE PULLED A FAST ONE! I THOUGHT HE WAS AFTER IMP, NOT BOBBY!



DEKE'S SMART! HE KNOWS IMP CAN'T RACE UNLESS BOBBY RIDES HIM!

WE'LL GET BOBBY BACK IN TIME FOR THE RACE!!

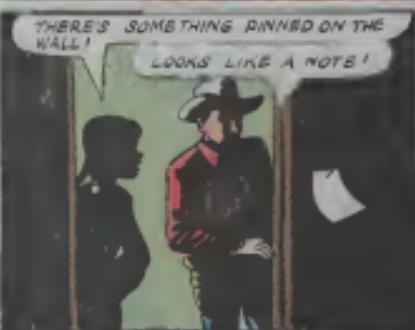


CHAMP AN' I'LL TRACK 'EM DOWN!

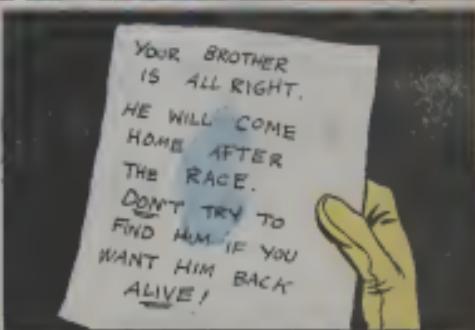


THERE'S SOMETHING PINNED ON THE WALL!

LOOKS LIKE A NOTE!



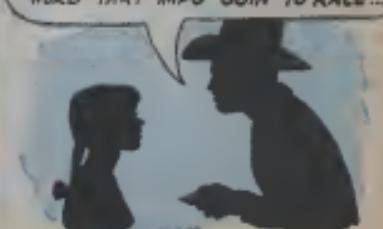
YOUR BROTHER IS ALL RIGHT, HE WILL COME HOME AFTER THE RACE. DON'T TRY TO FIND HIM IF YOU WANT HIM BACK ALIVE!

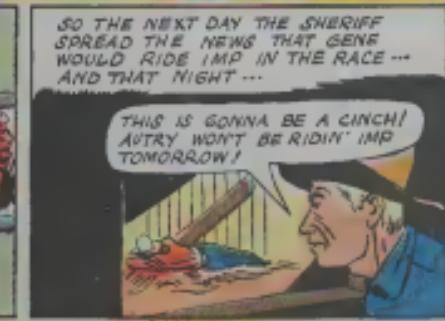


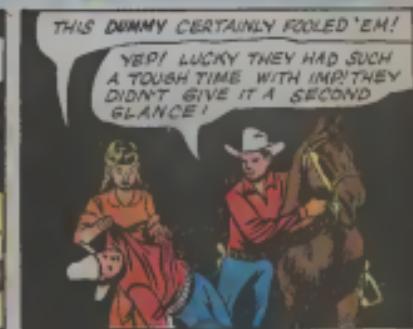
OH, GENE! WE WON'T DARE TRY TO FIND BOBBY NOW! THEY MIGHT HURT HIM -- EVEN K-KILL HIM ... IF WE DO!



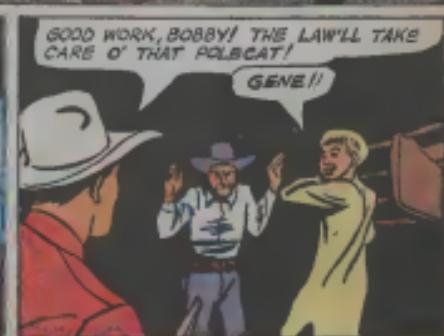
I KNOW! BUT I'VE GOT AN IDEA, NAN! SOON'S IT'S MORNING YOU RIDE TO TOWN AN' SEE SHERIFF WEST-- ASK HIM TO SPREAD THE WORD THAT IMP'S GOIN' TO RACE...











WE'VE GOT BOBBY AN' THE HORSE, BUT WE STILL HAVENT GOT THE GOODS ON DEKE!

MAYBE HE'LL TIP HIS HAND AT THE RODEO THIS AFTERNOON, WHEN HE SEES IMP AN' BOBBY!

I SURE HOPE SO! SEE YOU LATER, AUTRY!



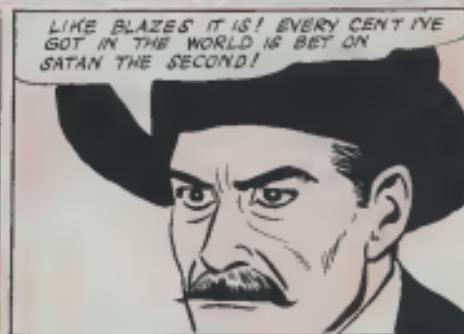
THAT AFTERNOON...



AN' BOBBY'S RIDIN' HIM!...

THE JIG'S UP, DEKE!

LIKE BLAZES IT IS! EVERY CENT I'VE GOT IN THE WORLD IS BET ON SATAN THE SECOND!



IMP CAN'T RACE! YOU CAN HIT HIM EASY FROM HERE, SLASH!

BUT ...

GO ON, SLASH! SHOOT QUICK!

DROP THAT GUN!



